



Wild Fisheries Review (WFR) - Members Bulletin: 14 July 2015

1. Introduction

This bulletin provides a summary of the key features of the Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR) process and provides members with information on the joint work which ASFB and RAFTS are undertaking, through the Joint Working Group (JWG) and elsewhere, to produce ideas to input into the reform process. We propose to issue the bulletin fortnightly; these bulletins will not replace the monthly news update, or other communications, but are designed to provide a more specific and targeted means of getting information quickly to the membership on ideas that are developing, particularly through the JWG. This, we hope, will help promote effective two-way communication, which we believe will be essential if we are to represent and manage the views of the membership through the representative bodies. There may also be occasions when we have little to report but we feel it is important we inform members of that as well.

2. Members' meeting and agreement

The members' meeting, held on 16 June, agreed that ASFB and RAFTS should engage constructively with Government. Members were also happy that the ASFB and RAFTS JWG should be considered an appropriate vehicle to develop ideas on how the operational aspects of any new management system can work effectively. Members recognised and accepted that the current number of management bodies (41 Boards and 26 Trusts) will be reduced in number. It was agreed that ASFB and RAFTS should engage with Government and local Boards/Trusts on working out an optimal number of fishery management organisations in a new framework. It was agreed that the RAFTS and ASFB chairmen would make themselves available to help facilitate discussions where it was felt to be helpful. Our letter of 23 June was issued to all Trusts and Boards offering to help – see [HERE](#). A note of the meeting was also issued – see [HERE](#).

3. Getting the reform in perspective

It is worth emphasising that, whilst the reform process has begun and the current Government consultation exercise ends on 7 August, **we are still at an early stage of the overall process.** Further Government consultation will take place as the reform process moves forward. The current exercise is focussed on broad principles, and it is important that the sector recognises that, and does not get drawn into too much detail at this stage, in terms of formal positions. There will be further opportunities to influence and inform the direction the reform takes using the extensive professional expertise and technical knowledge within our network. Government have given strong indications that they will be reliant on the sector for feeding in ideas for development over coming months.

4. Timelines

The current consultation ends on 7 August. **Individual Boards and trusts are strongly encouraged to submit individual responses. ASFB and RAFTS welcome early sight of these so that we can ensure the overall ASFB & RAFTS response broadly reflects member's views.** ASFB and RAFTS will be circulating a draft response to members **no later than 17 July** – you may wish to delay formally submitting your response until you have viewed this. Whilst individual Board and Trust responses will quite rightly reflect local experience and circumstances, it

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Useful links

WFR consultation (ends 7 August) [HERE](#)

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ASFB and RAFTS Reform web pages [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) (includes latest minutes of JWG)

is important that the overall messages contained in the ASFB & RAFTS and members' responses are as consistent as possible.

The next key stage will be a consultation on a draft national strategy and draft bill early in 2016. We understand that Scottish Government will be working on that following conclusion of the current consultation exercise and analysis of the responses. Whilst it is far too early to speculate on the form the bill is likely to take, we understand that the transition from the current structure to any new framework will not happen 'overnight'. It will have to recognise existing management cycles, plans and commitments, which will vary locally. Therefore, it is possible that transition will be phased over a period to accommodate this. Again, local/regional need is going to be a strong influencing factor for determining the geography of a new system, and it is imperative that this is driven locally. Local Boards and Trusts must ensure that this happens, as the failure to reach consensus locally is likely, in the medium term, to mean that jurisdictional areas may well be imposed. ASFB and RAFTS are very happy to help in facilitating local discussions, as offered in our letter of 23 June, linked above.

5. The JWG

The JWG is meeting on average on a monthly basis and is developing ideas on a range of areas – FMO core functions, roles, funding, interplay between local and national management and operational ability - it is not developing or agreeing policy, but will be providing baseline information and setting out ideas on which ASFB and RAFTS, and members, can comment on, test and ultimately agree as formal positions. We hope to start exposing some of these ideas very soon so that we can seek feedback from the wider membership. The first of these is likely to be some ideas about function of FMOs and a paper on this will be circulated shortly for comment and input.

6. Professional Advice

ASFB and RAFTS, through specifications agreed within the JWG, will be commissioning specialist advice as and when required to help provide a solid understanding of any legal and technical matters which may influence the changes proposed. At present, we have sought advice on two areas – 1) the potential impact of WFR on fishing ownership heritable rights, and 2), advice to explore the various constitutional options which might be used as vehicles for FMOs. Included in this will be the pros and cons of charitable status. With regard to 1, the opinion of Senior Counsel was commissioned by ASFB on behalf of its member boards and is confidential to those boards. The opinion has been made available to Board Chairmen and Clerks for the purposes of informing board discussions. It has also been circulated to the Trusts. With regard to 2, we are awaiting advice on the constitutional aspects, and we expect that to be available within the next week, and ideally by the time we issue the draft ASFB and RAFTS responses to members. This advice will be made available to all member Boards and Trusts.

7. Pace of change

It is important to recognise that, whilst the nature of the change proposed to fishery management is fundamental, it will be incremental and there are very real opportunities to influence the way this will happen. ASFB and RAFTS are advocating a measured, methodical and considered approach to this and it is important that the collective professional expertise within our network is fully harnessed and used to inform the best way forward. The JWG is working hard, under the direction of the ASFB and RAFTS Chairmen, to maintain pace with the reform process. There is a careful balance to be had in terms of developing ideas that are not too hard and fixed at a relatively early stage, yet we must think hard now about pragmatic options that will work and meet our fishery management requirements in the future. The JWG is trying to stay slightly 'ahead of the curve' on

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the basis of doing some detailed thinking on options, and it recognises the need to start exposing some thinking on these to members at the right time.

The next bulletin will be issued at the end of July.

8. **Remaining Scottish Government drop in events - see [HERE](#)**

15 July	Stirling	Active Angling	11 am – 3 pm
22 July	Melrose	Ormiston Institute	11 am – 3 pm
23 July	Dumfries	Cairndale Hotel	11 am – 3 pm
28 July	Glasgow	Glasgow Angling Centre	11 am – 3 pm
30 July	Inverness	Kingsmills Hotel	11 am – 3

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